

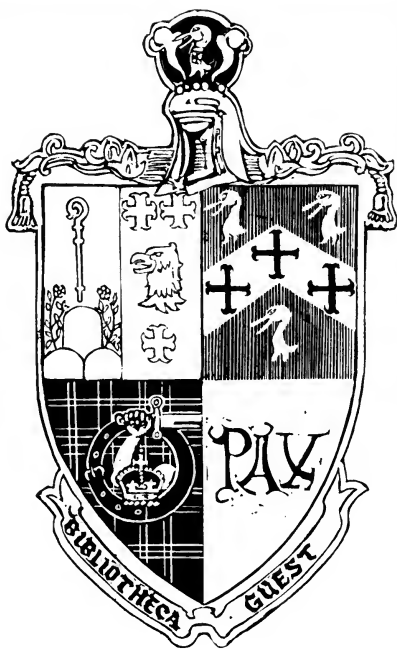


FORD ABBEY

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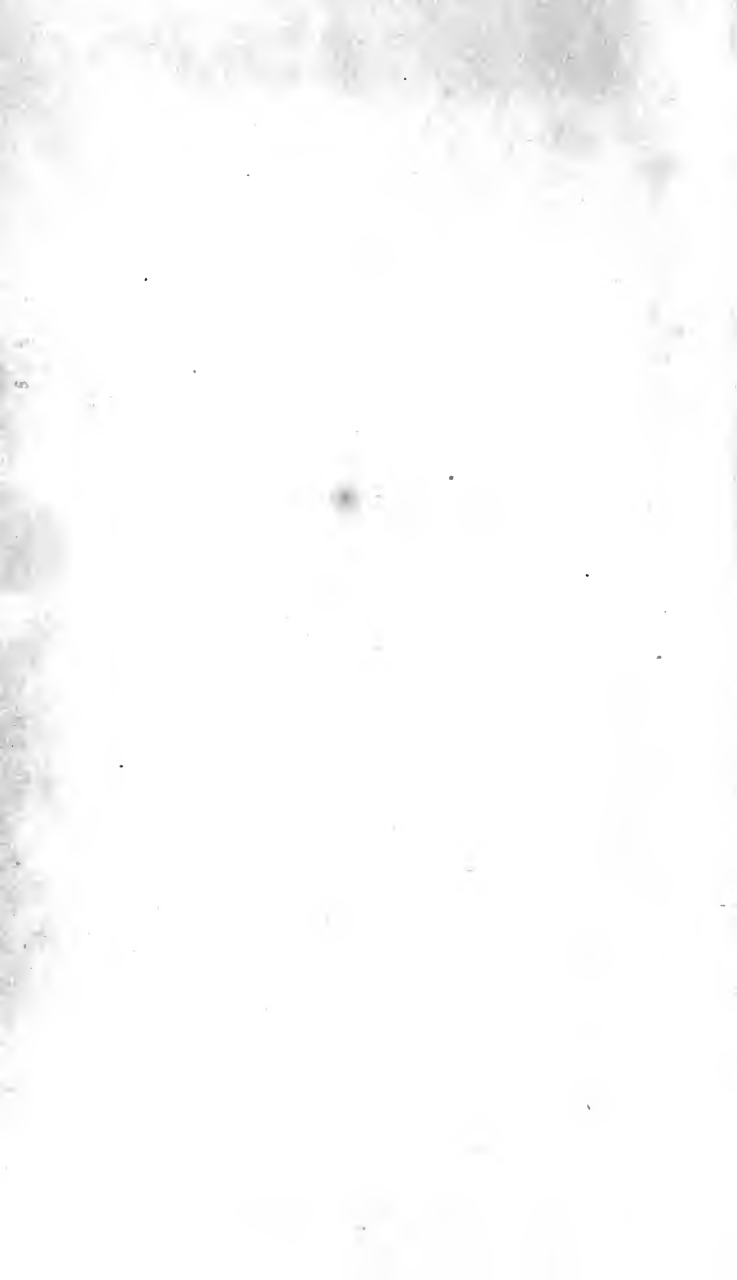




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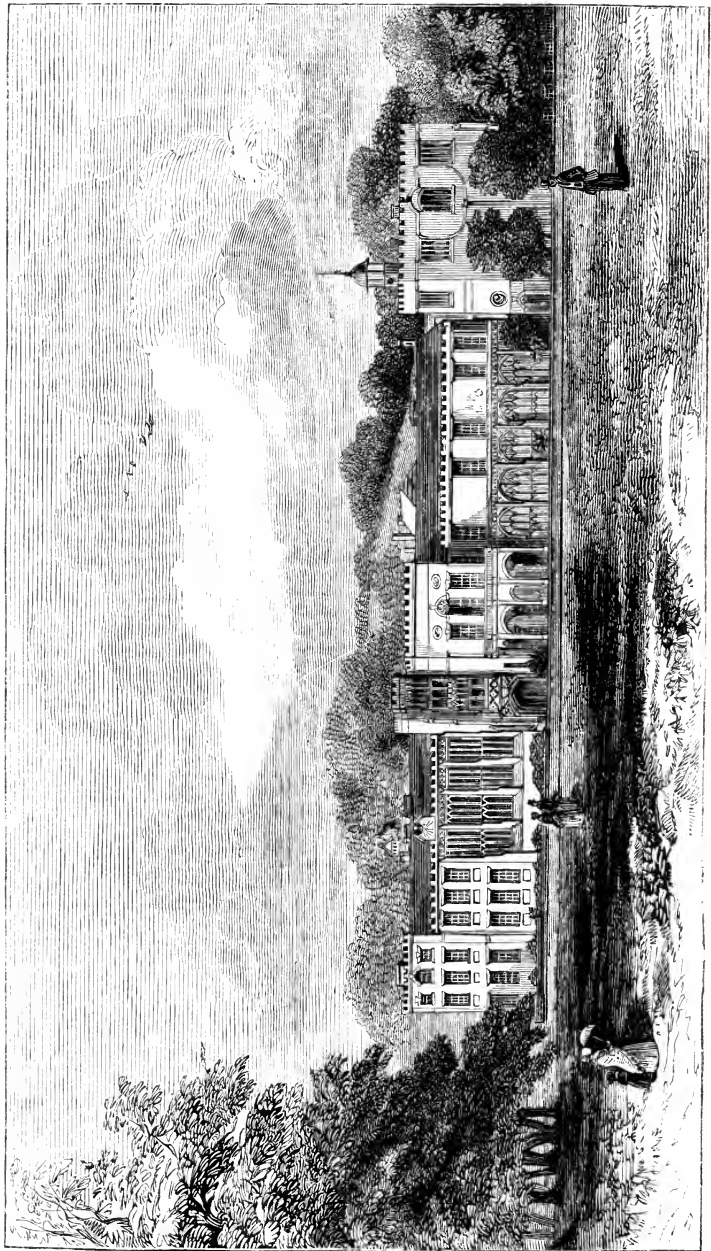
Toronto, Ontario



A
HISTORY
OF
FORD ABBEY.

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A
HISTORY
OF
FORD ABBEY,
DORSETSHIRE :

Late in the County of Debon.

LONDON:
HAMILTON, ADAMS AND CO.
PATERNOSTER ROW.

M.DCCC.XLVI.

TOMS, PRINTER, CHARD.



TO
THE REV. JOHN CLARKE, M. A.
OF CLAYHIDON, DEVON;
MONTAGUE BAKER BERE, Esq.
COMMISSIONER OF HER MAJESTY'S DISTRICT COURT OF
BANKRUPTCY AT EXETER;
AND
WILLIAM SALTER, Esq.
OF CHARD, SOMERSET;
TRUSTEES AND EXECUTORS UNDER THE WILL OF THE
LATE JOHN FRAUNCEIS GWYN, ESQUIRE.

Dear Sirs,

As the honourable parties chosen by the late Mr. Gwyn, for carrying out his wishes and intentions relating to the transfer of his magnificent mansion and demesne into other hands; and as I have in some degree (although a very subordinate one) been associated with you in the transaction; permit me to dedicate the following

little history to you, in gratitude for the uniform kindness and urbanity which I have at all times received at your hands. For the erudition displayed in its compilation, it cannot claim your notice; but as a picture of the past and present state of a place so interesting to us all, and the fashion of whose appearance may so soon pass away, it will probably possess a value to which it could not be otherwise entitled.

I am,

Dear Sirs,

Your obliged and

obedient servant,

M. A.

*Ford Abbey,
September 29th, 1846.*

HISTORY

OF

FORD ABBEY.

FORD ABBEY has long been an interesting object to the antiquary and the curious, as the remains of the most perfect monastery in England; and the courtesy of the late worthy proprietor allowed those who applied for permission (of which thousands availed themselves) to view its various beauties.

It is not a little singular, that a place so noted in its day for learning, and producing great men, should not have obtained more celebrity in print.

In compiling the following pages, we shall quote from the few authors who have men-

tioned it, whatever may be interesting on the subject; and without entering into a lengthened detail of Monachism, its effects on men and manners, the causes of its decay, and the apparent inconsistency of its probable partial re-appearance in the enlightened nineteenth century, we proceed with our little narrative.

Sir William Dugdale, in his *Monasticon*, states that “The Lord Baldwin de Brioniis, a famous soldier of Normandy, took to wife Albreda, niece to the Lord William, sur-named the Bastard, the famous Duke of Normandy, by whom the said Baldwin had, among others, one son named Richard, and a daughter named Adeliza or Alice. Now when the duke (having overcome the English in a battle, and slain their king, Harold) had wholly subdued the kingdom of England by conquest, and possessed himself of the imperial diadem, he did then and afterwards liberally bestow on the nobility and soldiery that came with him out of Normandy, divers lordships and principal honours in the kingdom, amongst whom he bestowed on the said

Richard (son of the said Baldwin) the honour and barony of Okehampton, in the county of Devon; to have and to hold the same to himself and his heirs of the king for ever. He gave also to the said Richard, the castle of Exeter, and the command of the county of Devon for a certain yearly rent to be paid to the king; by virtue of which grant and power, the said Lord Richard had the title of Viscount of Devonshire, which likewise descended to his successors until the sixteenth year of the reign of King Henry, son of King John."

So far Dugdale, who seems to have quoted from a manuscript in the Cottonian library, Oxford.

Cleveland, in his genealogical history of the Courtenays, says, "that Baldwin de Brioniis, so named from a place in Normandy, was also called Baldwin de Molis, and Baldwin de Sap, from other places in Normandy: he was second son unto Gilbert de Crispin, count de Brioniis, son of Godfrey, count d'Ewe, natural son unto Richard, the first duke of Normandy, great grandfather to the conqueror. He married Albreda, niece to William I., (his sister's

daughter), and had by her a son named Richard, and a daughter named Adeliza or Adelia.

But to return to Dugdale. "Baldwin was succeeded by his son Richard, who, as he had lived a stout soldier in youth, so in old age he became very devout, and gave all his lands at Brightley, within the honour of Okehampton, to an abbey of the Cistercian order, which he there founded in 1133, and procured of Gilbert, abbot of Waverley (a holy man), a convent of his own monks to be sent thither. In the place designed for the abbey, in three years, he raised such buildings as were most necessary; and in 1136, the first of King Stephen, he, with great devotion, put twelve monks (a sufficient title to it being first made to them), in possession of it, who, together with the Lord Richard, their abbot, at his devout desire, coming thither on foot in procession with the cross lifted up, setting forth on the fifth of the nones of May from Waverley (an abbey of the Cistercian order in Surrey, in the diocese of Winchester), were with great kindness received by him. Having thus accomplished his desire,

he continued to assist them in those buildings and other necessities until his death, which happened the year following, on the seventh of the calends of July, 1137, the second of King Stephen. He was buried in the chapel belonging to that monastery. His bones were afterwards removed, together with the bones of their abbot, Richard (who died at Brightley), and carried by the monks to Ford Abbey, and there buried in several places of the chancel above the place where now the high altar stands. This Viscount Richard had no issue, and left the whole of his estates to his sister, Adeliza, who was in consequence styled Viscountess of Devon.

“ The monks resided five years at Brightley, after the death of the Lord Viscount Richard; but, by reason of great want and barrenness, could abide there no longer, and determined to return to their former house of Waverley with their second abbot, Richard de Penington. On their return, passing by the manor of Thorncombe, belonging to the aforesaid viscountess, she, observing the manner how they passed (*viz.* with the cross lifted up, and two on foot walk-

ing before the rest), called them to her, and understanding from them the cause of their return, being inwardly touched with grief, she sighed and said, ‘Far be it from me, my lord, and you, holy fathers, that so damnable a reproach and so shameful a danger should alight upon me, as that what was by my lord and brother Richard, out of a pious and devout affection, so well and solemnly begun for the honour of God and the salvation of all of us, I, his sister and heir, and to whom, at his decease, he bequeathed all, should want either will or power to perfect. Behold my manor, where you now are, which is very fruitful and well wooded, which I give you for ever, in exchange for your barren land at Brightley, together with the mansion house and other houses. Stay there until a more convenient monastery may be built for you upon some other part of the estate; nor will we be wanting to you in this, but will give you our best assistance to carry on that building.’”

Religion, *then*, although clouded by errors and superstitions, consisted in active benevolence; and to it we are indebted for the magnificent cathedrals and monastic remains (such as the one we

are writing of) which beautify and adorn the land. Look around on this truly fertile spot, increased in beauty by cultivation, and then let due homage be paid to the elevated mind that could so easily relinquish it, as the donor said, "for the honour of God."

Boswell, in his antiquities, says, "when Adeliza so liberally endowed this abbey as above mentioned, it is generally understood that a part of her design was, to make it a place of refuge for those whom the war between the Empress Matilda and King Stephen might have ruined."

Returning again to Dugdale, we find that, "the monks resided at the manor house, then called Ford, but now Westford, nearly six years; during which time some convenient buildings were raised for them in the place intended for the monastery, which was then called Hartescath,¹ but now Ford: consequently, the present structure must have been finished in 1148, and the twelfth year of King Stephen. In the various accounts, there has been some mistake as to dates. The monks remained at Brightley five years after the death of their founder, the Lord Richard,

¹ Cleveland says, "Heresbath."

which happened in 1137; therefore their migration took place about 1142, when the Lady Adeliza gave them the manor, where they resided nearly six years, thus bringing the date as above. The Lady Adeliza died in the seventh year of King Stephen, Anno, 1142, the ninth of the calends of September, and was buried in the new monastery. She had by her husband (a Kentish knight), a daughter called Alice, or Alicia, who succeeded her in the lordship of Okehampton, and who also held the castle of Exeter, and the command of the whole county of Devon, at a certain yearly rent as was accustomed.

“The daughter Alice married the Lord Ralph Avenell, and had an only daughter, called Maud, married to the Lord Robert d’Averinges, and she had by him a daughter named Hawes, and two others, who became nuns. After the death of Lord Robert d’Averinges, the Lady Maud married, secondly, the Lord Robert, natural son of King Henry I., by whom she had also a daughter, heir to her said husband, whom she called Maud. She held the title of Viscountess as well after her marriage with her first husband as after his decease, when she was also called Maud d’Averinges.

She was a great protectress and patroness of her monks of Ford. Having tender bowels of pious devotion and affection towards God, and the holy religion, she did at once bestow upon her intercessors, the said monks, to the value of sixty marks, besides many other goods and profits, which she often and freely gave them. The Lady Maud died on the eleventh of the calends of October, 1173, and the nineteenth of the reign of King Henry II. Both her daughters, viz. Hawes, heir to the Lord Robert d'Averinges, and Maud, the daughter and heir of the Lord Robert, the king's natural son, fell wards to the king, who gave both the wardships and marriages of them to the noble Lord Reginald de Courtenay. The elder daughter, Hawes, as being more noble, and a viscountess, the Lord Reginald himself took to wife. The younger, viz. Maud, he bestowed on his son, William de Courtenay (his eldest son by a former wife in Normandy).

“The Lord Reginald de Courtenay continued the wonted devotion and affection of his ancestors towards God and his monks of Ford, protecting and promoting them on all occasions. He also commended himself to their prayers by

a certain gift of one hundred marks in money, besides goods and chattels; for he more trusted to the help of their prayers than all his earthly possessions. He died, happy in the Lord, on the fifth of the calends of October, 1194, and the fifth year of King Richard I. and was buried at Ford, in the north part of the chancel. But the aforesaid viscountess, who was called the Lady Hawes de Courtenay, by the surname of her husband, Reginald de Courtenay, whose relict she was, being intent upon works of piety and mercy, bestowed her lands of Herteyne on the said monks of Ford, for the perpetual maintenance of three poor persons in the place assigned for secular sick persons, besides other good offices. She died, full of days, in a good old age, the day before the calends of August, 1209, and the tenth year of the reign of King John, and lies buried in the chapel of Ford, on the south side of the chancel. She was succeeded by Robert de Courtenay, her son and heir by Reginald de Courtenay, who inherited the honour of Okehampton, likewise the castle of Exeter, and the sheriffalty of the county, until Henry II., in the sixteenth year of his reign, took the said castle

(as also many other castles in England) into his own hands; and then he lost both castle and the sheriffalty of the county, by reason whereof he was never after styled Viscount. He was highly esteemed for his integrity and bounty; was always very careful of his monks and their monastery of Ford; would not allow them to be molested; and was wont to say, that he had 'a fair feather in his tail — his house of Ford under his protection.' He called his monks his 'fathers and patrons;' and he was a true protector and defender, as if all things had been common betwixt them. In his time, Jeffery de Pomeroy challenged the lands of Tale; and, by the advice of the said Lord Robert, was induced to release all his right and claim to the said monks. Lord Robert gave him, in consideration of this release, fifty marks sterling, in ready money, the witnesses to which were John, archdeacon of Exeter, William, prior of St. Germain's, William de Tracy, brother of Hugh de Courtenay, and Henry, son of William de Tracy. This occurred during the abbacy of John de Warwick.

“The Lord Robert de Courtenay married Mary, the youngest daughter of the Lord William de

Revers, or Redvers, earl of Devonshire, and had with her all her estates and the chase of Crukes (except the patronages of churches, and fifty libratis of lands, etc., which were previously given to William, Lord Brewer, with the elder daughter of the said earl of Devonshire). The Lord Robert, having finished a godly life, dyed at his manor of Iwerne, the seventh of the calends of August, in 1242, and the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Henry III. He was brought to Ford, and buried in the chancel the third day (that is the fifth of the calends) of August, with all devotion and honour, in the second year of Adam, the abbot. Upon his sepulchre was erected, upon a pyramid, the statue of an armed soldier, and about was written this epitaph:—

‘Hic jacet ingenui de Courtenay gleba Roberti
Militis egregii virtutum laude referti.
Quem genuit strenuus Reginaldus Courtiniensis,
Qui Procer Eximius fuerat tunc Devoniensis.’

“Robert de Courtenay had by the Lady Mary de Redvers, John de Courtenay, his son and heir, famous in his generation for piety; and no whit short of his ancestors in devotion and good-will to his monks of Ford, esteeming their prayers

above all his works, and fully resting in them. The fruits of his hopes which he had in their prayers will appear by the following story.

“ It happened on a time, as he was returning from beyond the sea, that he and his followers were in imminent danger of shipwreck: even the sailors despaired of not only not saving the ship, but their lives also. In this danger, the Lord John spake to them in this manner: ‘ Mariners, be not afraid, but take courage, behave yourselves like men, and lend us your assistance who are ready to be shipwrecked, but for one hour, and by that time my monks of Ford will be risen to their prayers, and will intercede for me to the Lord, so that no storms, or winds, or waves, shall be able to shipwreck us, etc.’

“ To which one of his attendants returned this answer, ‘ My Lord, why do you talk at this rate of those monks or their prayers, when it is well known to us all that they are now in a deep sleep. How can they be mindful to pray for you, when they are so fast asleep, that they are not sensible of themselves?’

“ To this the Lord John (being firmly estab-

lished in his hope) replied, ‘ Although I know that many are now asleep, yet I am assured that most of them at this present, do instantly, by devout prayers beseech and entreat God for me, the meanest of their servants; nor can they in any wise, in such an instant of danger, be unmindful of me who have hitherto deserved so well of them, by preserving them and relieving them in their straits; and it is impossible they should perish who have such and so many persons to intercede for them day and night: and because I love them and they me, I do know and believe they do more frequently and devoutly pray to God for me.’

“ The pilot replied,—‘ Why do you mind these idle stories? You are at the point of death; make confession to one another, and commit your hopes to God in prayer;’ and having said thus, he cast away what he had in his hands, as if he had been presently to give up the ghost; nor did his heart only fail him, but all likewise in the ship were overwhelmed with despair.

“ Then the Lord John was very angry; and, lifting up his hands to God, he prayed on this

manner; ‘Almighty and merciful God, vouchsafe to hear the holy monks who are now praying for me, and me praying with them, and bring us safe and sound to our desired haven, according to thy goodness.’

“Having thus prayed, God (who delights in the single-hearted) did mercifully rescue them, and the ship was safe landed, so that those who were before cast down with the fear of death and shipwreck, were now raised with joy and did, together with the said Lord John, give solemn and devout thanks to God for their safety.

“On his return home, he was scarce able to relate to the full to his monks of Ford, with what humble thankfulness he did acknowledge that great goodness which, he said, ‘God had mercifully shown to him for the sake of their prayers and merits;’ and he swore that if he had been very devout before, and kind and bountiful to his said monks, he would be much more so for the future. He released and confirmed to them whatever they desired; and, at his devout request, they solemnly admitted him the same day into their fraternity. He died happily, in

Christ, the fifth of the nones of May, 1273, and in the first year of the reign of King Edward I., and was buried by his father, Robert de Courtenay, before the high altar at Ford. He bequeathed, with his body, forty pounds sterling to the said monastery, and left to his monks and brethren his arms and horse, and all other things belonging to his funeral paraphernalia.

“The Lord John de Courtenay married Isabel, the daughter of Lord John de Vere, earl of Oxford, by whom he had the first Lord Hugh de Courtenay. The Lady Isabel survived her husband, and married, secondly, the Lord Oliver de Dinham. She was buried at the Priests’ Friars, in Exeter.

“The Lord Hugh de Courtenay did not follow the example of his father in piety towards God, and tenderness towards the monks of Ford, but did much infest and trouble them, declaring that what his ancestors had given to pious uses, without reserving anything to themselves saving their suffrages, he claimed for his dogs and horses; and he affirmed (untruly) that the abbey of Ford, which was founded by his progenitors in the nature of a free, pure, and perpetual alms,

ought to be holden of him by these services, viz., when any war should happen, to find him horses and furniture and arms, and other accoutrements, and to keep for him two palfreys and one greyhound bitch, with her whelps every year, until the whelps should be a year old; all of which services he affirmed the Lord John de Courtenay, his father, to have been seised by the hands of the monks in the time of King Henry, the father of King Edward, then reigning, and that himself, in the late war in Wales, in the tenth year of King Edward, was likewise seised of some of these by the hands of the Lord William, then abbot of the said monastery. This abbot was William de Crikâ, of whose contempt and rebellion we shall give the particulars hereafter.

“The Lord Hugh continued his hostility to the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Ford, and the monks there; and on the day of St. Lawrence, 1228, and the sixteenth year of King Edward I., upon pretence of the aforesaid service being in arrear to him, took away all their cattle found at their grange of Westford; and, coming with a great multitude of people thither,

he caused their oxen, at Westford and Orchard, to be loosed from the plough, and to be driven away to Dartmoor, near Okehampton; for the replevying of which King Edward wrote to the sheriff of Devon on the 19th of September. The sheriff wrote back to the king, that ‘the bayliffs of the Lady Isabel de Fortibus, countess of Devon, lady of the hundred of Exminster (to whom the sheriff had sent the return of the king’s writ), could not replevy the said oxen, and other chattels of the abbot of Ford, because the aforesaid Hugh did avow them to be his:’ upon this there was a suit in the king’s court; and at length a kind of agreement was made, but did not last long, for the Lord Hugh, upon some pretence, came with many others to Orchard on the Lord’s Day next after the feast of St. Agatha, in the eighteenth year of King Edward, violently to make distress as before; but was hindered by the people of the abbey, who threatened to shoot him, so that he took no cattle away; but, on his return to Colcombe, at the grange of Westford, he took one bull, twelve cows, four oxen, and four heifers, and caused this cattle to be impounded at

Whimple, so that he awakened the suit which was betwixt him and the abbot Nicholas; and it would have been to his utter undoing, had not the abbot withdrawn his action."

It may be as well here to mention, that "the Lady Isabel de Fortibus, countess of Devon, above mentioned, was the daughter of Baldwin de Redvers, by Amisa, daughter of Gilbert, earl of Clare: she succeeded her brother Baldwin in his honours and lands, he having died without issue in the forty-sixth year of his age. She was great grand-daughter of William de Redvers, the father of Mary, wife of Lord Robert de Courtenay, grand-father of the above Lord Hugh de Courtenay; consequently, the Lady Isabel de Fortibus, wife of William de Fortibus, earl of Albemarle, and Hugh de Courtenay, were second cousins. The Lady Isabel had many children, but they all died without issue in her life time; and, not liking the family of Courtenay should enjoy her large possessions, she sold unto King Edward I., for six thousand marks, the manor of Christchurch, the Isle of Wight, and Lambeth, near London, in the twenty-first year of the said king's reign. On her death shortly

after, the title of Earl of Devon devolved of right unto Hugh de Courtenay, the second of that name.¹

“The turbulent Lord Hugh de Courtenay married Eleanor, daughter of Lord Hugh le Despencer the first, and had by her, Hugh, his heir (afterwards earl of Devon); also Phillip, lord of Moreton, near Dartmoor, a famous knight, who was slain on the eighth of the calends of July, 1314, at Stirling, in Scotland; and four daughters, viz. Isabel, wife of the Lord John de St. John; Aveling wife of Sir John Gifford, knight; Eglin, wife of Robert de Scales; and Margaret, wife of John de Mules, a noble young soldier.

“At length, the Lord Hugh ended his mortal career, no doubt much to the relief of his persecuted monks, whom he ever hated. He died at Colcombe, on the third of the calends of March, 1291, in the nineteenth year of the reign of King Edward I. and was buried at Cowick, near Exeter.

“The Lady Eleanor survived her husband thirty-seven years; and, being endowed with

¹ Vide Sir W. Pole's History of Devon.

wisdom and prudence, ordered the affairs of her family, and lived after a handsome and plentiful manner. She had both sense and wit; and, though she was intent upon the world, was given to hospitality. She died on the second of the calends of October, 1328, and was buried at Cowick by the side of her husband.

“ Their son, Lord Hugh the second, was a person of great wisdom and knowledge. He inherited all his father’s estates, and at seventeen years of age, married the Lady Agnes, sister of John, Lord St. John, who had married his sister. He vastly increased in riches and glory above all his progenitors; and the earldom of Devon fell to him on the death of Isabel de Fortibus. He was not more kind or generous to the monks of Ford than his father: indeed, he retained the old grudge against them, and there were three evils with which he prejudiced the house of Ford: he did unduly claim and challenge the abbey founded in the nature of a free, pure, perfect, and perpetual alms, and asserted it to be held by severe and burthensome services;—secondly, he drew to his hundred of Harridge, the liberties which the abbot

and his tenants were accustomed to have in their manor of Tale, with the rent which they used to pay for it; — and, thirdly, he procured the abbey to be bound to the church of Cruke,¹ in the yearly rent of fifty shillings.

“The said Lord Hugh de Courtenay, earl of Devon, had, by the Lady Agnes, John, his first born, abbot of Tavistock, to which, in his youth, he betook himself; Hugh, who became his heir; Robert, who died young; and Thomas, who married Muriel, eldest daughter of the Lord John de Mules; and two daughters, Eleanor, wife of John de Gray, and Elizabeth, wife to the Lord Bartholomew de Lydell. He died, 1336, and in the ninth year of the reign of King Edward III. The Lady Agnes survived him, and died, 1340, on Sunday, the feast of the Holy Trinity, having been married fifty-three years: she was buried at Cowick, near Exeter.

“Lord Hugh de Courtenay, the third of that name, and second earl of Devon (second son of the aforesaid Hugh de Courtenay and the Lady Agnes), married, in his father’s life-

¹ Crewkerne.

time, in the year 1325, the third of the ides of August, to the Lady Margaret, daughter of the Lord Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, a stout soldier and renowned in arms, who, before the marriage contract, was slain at Pontefract by the king's guard. The mother of the Lady Margaret was highly descended, being the Lady Elizabeth, daughter of King Edward I. ; consequently, the family of Courtenay was again ennobled by royal blood. The said Lord Hugh and the Lady Margaret had Hugh the fourth, and other sons and daughters."

Cleveland, in his genealogical history of the family of Courtenay, says, that " Sir W. Pole, Prince (in his 'Worthies of Devon'), and also Mr. Westcott, give a different account of the family of Brioniis; but that it appears, from the register of Ford Abbey, that both Reginald and Hawise de Courtenay were benefactors to the abbey, and their deaths registered there; but neither William nor Matilda de Courtenay are mentioned, which they certainly would have been, had Matilda been baroness of Okehamp-ton, and wife of Reginald de Courtenay."

The question only concerns the family; but could the register of the abbey be found, it would clear up the point. Although many of the accounts written by the monks were apocryphal, it is not likely they inserted in their register those who were not benefactors, and omitted those who were.

Polwhele, in his *History of Devon*, adopts Dugdale's account also.

One thing is certain, the Courtenays were patrons of the abbey for centuries, and were buried there. Monuments were also erected to them; and it is a great pity that no account remains of what became of them on the dissolution of the monastery. There is now at Ford Abbey, on the chimney-piece in the saloon, a small marble tablet or shield, having dolphins as supporters (the dolphin being one of the badges of the Courtenays), with angels on them, evidently monumental; the tradition is, that it formed part of a monument either in the church or chapel of Ford.

The preceding pages bear more reference to the history of the Courtenay family than to the abbey; but it was deemed necessary to give it,

in order the better to understand the relative position of the parties. We will now proceed to cull, from sources within our reach, matters more immediately connected with so celebrated a place.

The monastery was founded, as proved, about the year 1148, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The community consisted of an abbot and twelve monks. "The order was Cistercian,¹ deriving the name from Cistertium, or Cisteaux, in the diocese of Chalons. They were sometimes called Bernardines, and were so particular as not to allow another religious house near them; they had the denomination of White Monks, from a white gown or cossack they wore at church. According to Emmilianne, they pretended to adopt the white habit in obedience to the Virgin Mary, who appeared to St. Bernard (the founder of a hundred and fifty of the houses), and commanded that the dress should be adopted for her sake to whom their monasteries were generally dedicated. The first house was at Waverley, in Surrey; and from thence did the monks of Ford come with their first abbot,

¹ Boswell's Antiq.

the Lord Richard, appointed in 1133, who died at Brightley : then Robert de Penington, to whom the Lady Adeliza gave her rich manor of Thorncombe, and during whose abbacy she died. He was succeeded by the celebrated Baldwin,¹ surnamed Devonius from his county, who was born at Exeter, of mean parentage; yet they were careful of his education, and kept him at school, unto which he was well disposed. He studied some time at the famed abbey of Glastonbury, in the county of Somerset, where he made great progress in virtue and learning. He also became a schoolmaster, and was at length admitted into holy orders; and for his eminent sanctity of life was made archdeacon, though by whom, or of what place, it does not appear, which venerable office, whether for that he thought it too secular, or that it involved him too much in the affairs of the world, or some other reason, he laid aside, and with great devotion took upon himself the habit and became a monk of the more strict Cistercian order in the abbey of Ford, where, exceeding the other monks, he was, within a year after his admission,

¹ Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

chosen abbot of that noted convent. Henry II. appointed him bishop of Worcester, and he was consecrated to that see in 1181: here he continued three years, and was then translated to the see of Canterbury, where he was installed archbishop, and primate of all England, with great solemnity, May 19, anno 1185.

“ This was not done without some opposition. The suffragan bishops of the province of Canterbury looked upon it as their right to elect their archbishops, which the monks of that church also challenged as their due. The controversy grew so high, that they all appealed to Rome. Here the cause depended for nine months, when the pope’s mandate came, requiring all persons concerned to proceed to the election of a fit person for that venerable chair. Time and place were fixed, but the monks not coming according to appointment, the bishops proceeded to elect Baldwin.” Giraldus Cambrensis, who lived in his time, and was personally acquainted with him, gives an account of his body, temper, learning and piety. “ First, as to his body; he was of a brown complexion, of a plain and comely countenance, stature of the middle size, of a

good habit of body, slender not very gross. As a Christian bishop, he was meek and peaceable, sober and modest, insomuch Fame herself, in her spotted coat, never durst say any thing to his prejudice. He was spare of speech, slow to anger, serious in his looks, mild and remiss almost to a fault, through which occasion, 'tis said, the pope thus accosted him in a letter, which he sent him on a time, '*Urbanus, servus servorum Dei, monacho ferventissimo, abbati calido, episcopo tepido, archiepiscopo remisso salutem.*'

“As for his learning he descends to us under a high character: he was a very wise and understanding prelate, an excellent orator, an exact philosopher, and adapted unto all kinds of studies. To crown all his accomplishments, he was abundantly skilled in the holy scriptures; and so, if the various authors who have written of him had been silent on the matter, the works he left behind would sufficiently declare.

“Lastly, his admirable piety and devotion, his honest and pious conversation,¹ proved an eminent light unto the people, so that he is acknowledged to have excelled his immediate

¹ Girald. in Whart. Aug. Sac. vol. ii. p. 430.

predecessor but one, St. Thomas à Becket: for Thomas, in a journey, when he came to any town or parish, would go first to the hall, but Baldwin to the church. He crowned Richard I., with great pomp and state at Westminster, the 3rd of September, 1189;¹ and when that monarch determined on rescuing the Holy Sepulchre and Jerusalem out of the hands of the Saracens, Baldwin promoted the undertaking to the utmost of his power, preaching and exhorting all Christian people to follow the *cræsado*, and attend their sovereign.² Notwithstanding he was now of a very considerable age, he was not one of those that laid heavy burdens on other men's shoulders that he would not bear himself. After having despatched the affairs for which he stayed behind, he speedily followed, and safely arrived at Ptolemais, a city of Phœnicia, where he found the army suffering from sickness and famine, as well as the leading princes in a sad division. He behaved himself as became a Christian bishop, and was especially careful of his countrymen, by preaching to them and comforting them in the

¹ Brady's History of England.

² Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

best manner he could. He was taken ill of a dangerous disease, and died about the year 1191, and was buried at Tyre. What riches he had by him at the time of his death, he ordered to be distributed among the soldiers, and constituted Hubert, bishop of Salisbury (his successor in the see of Canterbury), the executor of his last will and testament. He wrote a variety of works, and dedicated them to his friend and countryman, Bartholomew Iscanus, bishop of Exeter, who, it is supposed, received his education at the abbey of Ford (at that time famed for its learning and devotion), and between whom a great intimacy ever existed, as Iscanus dedicated his works to Baldwin.

“Roger the Cistercian, or, as Prince styles him, the Cistercian Roger, obtained great notoriety about this time. He took his name, not from his progenitors, nor from the place where he was born, but from the religious order which he assumed. He made his profession near the place of his birth, in the abbey of Ford. Fuller says, ‘Here the judicious reader will please himself to climb up the two following mountains of extremes (only with his eye), and then descend

into the vale of truth which lies betwixt them.’¹ Leland says, ‘*Doctis artibus et pietate, in solito, quodam animi ardore, noctes atque dies invigilavit;*’ translated by Prince thus, ‘That with an unwonted ardour of mind he gave himself up to the study of piety and learning night and day.’ Bale writes, ‘*Invigilavit fallaciis atque imposturis diabolicis, ut Christi gloriam, obscuraret,*’— ‘That he diligently applied himself to fallacies, and devilish impostures, that he might obscure the glory of Christ.’² I believe that bilious Bale would have been sick of the yellow jaundice, if not venting his choler in such expressions.

“ Our Roger³ travelled much, especially in Flanders; and here he was when the fame of Elizabeth, abbess of Schonough, flew about the world, which Elizabeth was a nun of a certain monastery on the borders of Trier.⁴ About the year 1152, when she was three-and-twenty, it was said the Lord visited her in a wonderful manner, and communicated many visions and revelations which he was pleased to conceal from

¹ Fuller’s “*Worthies*.”

² Bale, *Cent. Tert.* No. 23, p. 223.

³ Prince’s ‘*Worthies of Devon.*’

⁴ Treves.

the rest of mankind. On the Lord's Day, and other festivals, she fell into raptures, and uttered many divine expressions in the Latin tongue, which she had never learned; 'which visions and revelations, not dictated by the Holy Ghost, but by some monkish impostor or other,' as Bale tells us, 'were written by this Roger, who, with the assistance of William, abbot of Savigny, in Normandy, reduced them to order in a volume, which he dedicated to his abbot, Baldwin, then abbot of Ford, under this title, '*Revelationes Elizabetha*, lib. ii.' He also wrote '*Encomium D'Mariæ*, lib. i,' in rhyming verse, and added to the former: this also he sent by Sigismund the monk, unto Baldwin. There is no account of where he died. He flourished in the year 1180, in the reign of Henry II.

"Abbot Robert followed Baldwin, in whose abbacy Reginald de Courtenay, by his marriage with the Lady Hawes D'Averinges, viscountess of Devon, became patron and a liberal benefactor of the abbey. There flourished, about this time, Maurice Somerset; he was a good writer in prose and verse, and was monk of this abbey, from whence he emerged and became the chief

writer at Oxford.¹ His deserts preferred him abbot of Wells.

“The next abbot was John, surnamed Devoni-
nius, alias De Forda Johannes, or John of
Devon: the place of his nativity is not known.
Eminent men, in those days, were wont to take
names from the house or place of their birth;
but in this case from the county, as better
known. He became distinguished for learning,
piety, and devotion: he was for some years
monk, and then chosen abbot for this monastery.
Fuller says, ‘he travelled into foreign parts, not
as too many, *weed*, but gathered the flowers, re-
turning stored with good manners, and stocked
with good learning: he endeavoured that all his
convent should be like him; and Ford Abbey in
his time had more learning therein than three
convents of the same bigness.’ Having thus sig-
nalised himself for piety and devotion, he was
called to court, and made chaplain in ordinary
to King John, in whose grace and favour he so
increased, that he became his confessor. He²
wrote many pious works, and died in the year

¹ Wood’s *Athenæ Oxon*, lib. i. p. 57.

² Bale, *Cent. Tert.*

1210, and was buried in his own convent without any funeral pomp."

In the year 1208, the presentation to the church at Holditch was claimed by William Fleming, against the abbot of Ford, but the decision was in favour of the latter.

The Lady Hawes of Courtenay died anno 1209, the year before Abbot John, and was interred in the chapel of the monastery.

Abbot Roger resigned in 1236, and was succeeded by John de Warwick, during whose abbacy it was, that Jeffery de Pomeroy challenged the lands of Tale.

On the 19th of December, 1239, William Brewer, bishop of Exeter, issued a deed, directing that the annual payment of two marks from the vicarage of Thorncombe to the abbot and convent of Ford, for the support of lights in the abbey church, should be augmented to six marks yearly for the time to come.

Adam was elected to the dignity of abbot in 1240; and, in the second year of his government, that munificent patron of the monastery, the Lord Robert de Courtenay, died. We have no account of the death of Abbot Adam.

King Henry III., in the year 1244, confirmed the manor and church of Thorncombe to the abbot and convent of Ford.

The first abbot and convent of Newenham (now an interesting ruin situated about one mile south of the town of Axminster) rested a night at Ford Abbey, January 5th, 1247, on their way from Beaulieu to take possession of their new abode.¹

Abbot William, whilst visiting Waverley convent, died there, in 1262, and was buried in its chapter house.²

William de Crikâ³ followed, whose government was distinguished by various troubles. Hugh de Courtenay (eldest son and heir of John de Courtenay of pious memory) did very much molest the monks of Ford, and wished to change the endowment of his ancestors, granted in Frank Almoigne, into a severe service, as before observed.⁴ His opposition to Bishop Bronescombe,

¹ Mr. Davidson's "History of Newenham Abbey."

² Dr. Oliver's *Monasticon*, p. 339.

³ Crewkerne.

⁴ Frank Almoigne was a tenure, which exempted the holder of lands from every kind of obligation except that of saying masses for the benefit of the grantor's family.

the bishop of his diocese, caused his excommunication in 1275, he having been previously charged with having excommunicated the bishop, who invoked the assistance of the secular power to punish the abbot's contumacy.¹ The king appointed the dean of Sarum, and the archdeacon of Dorset, professors of canon law, to judge between the parties. On October 2nd, 1276, the first sitting was held at Westminster. The abbot declared his repentance, and offered to pay £500; but the judges deferred their opinion until after the following Easter. In the interim, the abbot implored the king to prevent the secular power being directed against him. He maintained that the bishop had no power over him, as his convent was specially exempted by papal indults from any episcopal jurisdiction. The various abbots of the Cistercian order, supported the cause of their brother William of Ford, and addressed a petition to the king in Parliament at Winchester, representing that Bishop Bronescombe's proceedings were infringements of the privileges of the order and of no effect; and

¹ Bishop Bronescombe's Register, and Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.

praying that the royal writ might be withdrawn. At last, final sentence was given at Westminster, on the 5th May, 1277, that the abbot should recall the sentence of excommunication which he had fulminated against the bishop; that he should declare it to be null and void; that he and his monks and dependants of the abbey, who had incurred excommunication, should proceed, on the ensuing feast of the nativity of St. John the Baptist, from the gate of St. Peter's cemetery, in Exeter, to the cathedral door bare-headed, and bare-footed, and loosely dressed, and there receive a discipline from the bishop or his deputy; that the abbot should further pay one thousand marks. The bishop was then enjoined to revoke all his censures against the abbot and convent, to remit nine hundred marks; the payment of the remaining hundred marks to be made by the abbot to the bishop or his proxy, in the cathedral church, in equal proportions, on the festival days of Michaelmas and Easter; and, with the exception of the discipline, the bishop is directed to dispense with the rest of the penance.

In 1276, there was extorted from this abbot

and his convent, the very large sum of £15 6s. 8d., on a subsidy raised by King Edward I. to maintain his expedition against Llewellyn, prince of Wales.

Bishop Quivil,¹ solemnly blessed Abbot Nicholas, whilst pontifically celebrating mass at Axminster, on the feast of the circumcision, January 1st, 1283: this abbot had also to contend against the persecutions of the Lord Hugh de Courtenay before described.

William de Fria, or Fry,² was for some years abbot, but resigned his station on being chosen abbot of the neighbouring convent of Newenham, the 14th of April, 1297. He laid aside the jurisdiction of that office the 3rd of February, 1303, and dying shortly after, was buried at Ford.

Abbot Henry³ occurs next:—he was also molested in his government and possession by Hugh de Courtenay the second, who abetted the rector of Cruke⁴ against him in a cause concerning tithes, which was heard before the bishop

¹ Dr. Oliver's *Monasticon*.

² Mr. Davidson's *History of Newenham Abbey*, p. 65.

³ Dugdale's *Monasticon*.

⁴ Crewkerne.

of Bath and Wells, contrary to the wishes of the abbot and convent. The bishop decreed that the house of Ford stood bound to the church of Croke for the yearly payment of fifty shillings to the prejudice of their privileges and the great injury of the monastery.

Abbot William¹ was confirmed the 22nd September, 1319. The following was his formula of obedience to Bishop Stapledon : — “ I, Brother William, abbot of Ford, promise that I will perpetually show the subjection, reverence, and obedience appointed by the holy fathers, according to the rules of St. Benedict, to you, O lord bishop, and to your successors that shall be canonically appointed, and to the holy see of Exeter, my own order being inviolate.” Bishop Grandisson applied to this abbot and convent for a subsidy, to enable him to meet the enormous demands of the papal court and chamber. They were unable, however, to comply, chiefly on account of their heavy expences in repairing their ruinous monastery and church. Charmouth received some privileges from him of a free borough, and its boundaries were settled.

¹ Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.

John de Chidley was admitted abbot, June 24th, 1330.

Abbot Adam was confirmed September 29th, 1345. He found the abbey church in a state that required rebuilding.

John Chylheglys is named abbot in Bishop Brantyngham's register, May 24th, 1373.

Walter Burstok was confirmed abbot, April 16th, 1378. He renewed his obedience to Bishop Brantyngham on Palm Sunday, April 11th, 1380.

Nicholas was abbot in 1388. It was in his time that a commission was issued by the bishop of Bath and Wells, to shut up Robert Charde in solitary confinement at his own express desire ; and for the gratification of the curious in such matters, and as a picture of the times, we give the document entire, as translated from the Latin by a reverend friend.

“A commission to shut up Robert Charde, a monk, in a solitary house.

“Richard Pates, canon of the church of Wells, vicar general in things spiritual of the venerable lord, our father in Christ, Henry, by the grace

of God, lord bishop of Bath and Wells, acting in foreign parts, to the discreet men, William Sture, of Whitestaunton, and John Battyn, of West Coker, rectors of the churches, and John Wall, procurator, jointly and severally, sendeth greeting in the Saviour of all men.

“We, taking into our consideration the praiseworthy purpose of Master Robert Charde, monk of the monastery of Ford, of the Cistercian order, in the diocese of Exeter, personally appearing in our presence, on the 27th day of the month of October, in the year 1402, in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, adjoining the close of the cathedral church of Wells, and in this case appealing to the jurisdiction of the said reverend father, and showing the abbot of Ford’s letter of dismissal, and depositing the same in the registry of the same reverend father, who, in our presence hath humbly chosen to lead a solitary life, and that of an anchorite, being about to dwell continually in a certain house near the parish church of Crukern, built for such a person, on the western side of the same church under the churchyard, and hath urgently entreated that he may by us be admitted to live

the solitary life continually after this manner in the said house;—

“We, therefore, wishing to be certified of the life, manners and conversation, of the said Robert, the truth of these premises being more diligently investigated, have admitted and carefully examined witnesses put on oath, through whom, and by other documents, we have found the same Master Robert to be of praiseworthy life and honest conversation, and to be a man apt, suitable and consistent, to be admitted to a solitary life of this kind, and this his supplication, of which it is premised, that it is agreeable to reason; and we have admitted the aforesaid Master Robert Charde to live continually a solitary life after this manner, or to be an anchorite in the said house, built beneath the church yard of Crukern as is aforesaid: all circumstances in this case required concurring, assurance being previously given by the same Master Robert of his faithfully observing chastity from this hour as heretofore, and all other due observances usual in such cases to be done and observed: and on the plea of justice, we decree that the said Master Robert be inducted into

the same house according to the manner, form, and custom usual to be done in such cases, and that he shall be perpetually shut up in the same without any departure whatsoever;—

“Unto you, therefore, jointly and severally, of whose faithfulness and diligence we have full assurance in the Lord, we commit our office, with the power of any canonical coercion, to induct canonically, the said Master Robert Charde into the said solitary house of Crukern, and shut him up with those solemnities usual to be performed in such cases; that he shall dwell or remain in the same from this time forth and perpetually without any departure.

“And what you shall do in the things premised, you will take care duly to inform us, when you shall be called upon, in the case of the said Master Robert, with the rule of these presents under seal.

“Given under seal of our office, etc. etc.”¹

It is evident, from the foregoing, that the ecclesiastical authorities were very particular whom they admitted to the high honour of becoming an anchorite; and no wonder, as such

¹ Annals of Johannes Trokeloe.

characters were venerated by the commonalty; while it would have brought discredit on the order, had any but the most pious been so solemnly and ceremoniously inducted to so great a privilege. It was rather a singular abode for Master Charde under the churchyard. The town was not then peopled as now, or he would not have been very solitary in the strict sense of the word. We can find no further account of this pious anchorite.

King Henry IV. in 1410, and the eleventh year of his reign, granted a market at Ford to Abbot Nicholas, who had also a market and fair at Thorncombe; and the fair is still held for cattle on Easter Tuesday and the 20th of October.

John Bokeland was confirmed abbot, June 10th, 1419.

Abbot Richard, was, we believe, his successor.

Robert was abbot, in 1448.

Abbot Elyas occurs in 1462.

Abbot Whyte,¹ in the sixth year of King Henry VII, anno 1490, leased to Robert and Jane Dene and William their son, the reversion of various lands in Leigh and Whatley: to hold

¹ Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.

the premises for their lives under the yearly rent of seven marks. He also, just before his death, viz., April 18th, 1521, leased to Richard Hayball, his wife Jane, and their son William, the manor house of Sadborow, and various fields: to hold the same for their lives under a yearly rent of seven marks.

We come now to Thomas Charde, who succeeded to the abbacy in 1521, and was the last abbot of this noted convent. He was born at Tracys-Hays¹ in the parish of Awliscombe, near Honiton; was educated in St. Bernard's (now St. John the Baptist's) College at Oxford, and became eminent for virtue and learning, being styled in the public register, October 2nd, 1507, as "*Vir magna doctrina et virtute clarus.*"² He enjoyed a multiplicity of preferments. Bishop Oldham of Exeter selected him for his coadjutor in the episcopal office, by the title of Solubria. In 1508, he was collated by Bishop Oldham to the living of Torrington Parva: he was also preferred to St. Gluvias, which he resigned some years after. In June, 1512, he

¹ Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

² Wood's *Athenæ Oxon.* vol. i. page 645.

received for the better maintenance of his episcopal dignity, the vicarage of Wellington, county of Somerset. In 1513, he was appointed to the wardenship of the college at Ottery, which he resigned October 16th, 1518, to be instituted in the vicarage of Holbeton, in the deanery of Totness: this he also resigned October 24th, 1520, for an annuity of £12 from its profits.¹

Being so piously and religiously disposed, he became a monk of the Cistercian order, in the abbey of Ford, and was soon chosen abbot. No doubt he foresaw the storm impending over the religious establishments of the country; for he began to set his house in order. He beautified and adorned the abbey (of which more hereafter), the splendid hall and cloister remaining perfect to this day.

Below the battlement of the magnificent front entrance tower, is the following inscription: "Año Dñi millesimo quingesimo vigo octaº. Año factum est Thoma Chard, Abb."²

Leland,³ who visited the abbey during the progress of his work, says, "Coenobium nunc sumptibus plane non credendis abbas magnificentissime restaurat."

¹ Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.

² Lyson's Devon.

³ De Scriptoribus Britannius, page 231.

Dr. Chard¹ was also a good benefactor to his college in Oxford, either by repairing the old, or adding new buildings; in token whereof his memory is preserved in several glass windows of that house; particularly in a middle window on the south side of the tower, where his name was (if not still), contracted in golden letters, in an escutcheon sable, and had behind it, paleways, an abbot's crosier. He was also a benefactor of St. Margaret's hospital, near Honiton.

He made various grants of lands during his government of the abbey. On September 20th 1533², he granted to William Mychell and Alice his wife, for their lives, a house and garden called the chauntry house, eight loads of fuel wood, four casts of convent bread, four casts of common bread, of the weight of convent bread, four gallons of convent ale, two gallons of small ale, weekly, to be delivered with one cast of brown bread to them or either of their assigns at the bakehouse and brewhouse of the said monastery; also a pottage of fish and flesh, as much as two of the monks of the said monastery received;

¹ Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

² Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.

and further to pay the said William and Alice, an annuity of eight marks. This lease was allowed by the court of augmentation, February 11th, in the thirty-first year of Henry VIII.

On September 3rd, 1537, the year after the suppression of the smaller monasteries, the larger establishments that had any hopes of a longer existence reformed their institutions, and put on a semblance (at least) of conformity to their rules.

Abbot Chard granted to William Tyler, of Axminster, master of arts, an annuity of £3 6s. 8d., and a gown yearly of four yards of "brode cloth" at five shillings a yard, with a furnished chamber in the house, and his commons with the brethren, in reward of his diligent service to the abbey. He was further engaged to teach grammar to the boys in the monastery, as well as expound the scriptures in the refectory, when required. After the dissolution, the augmentation court, on the 26th April, 1539, allowed William Tyler, a pension of £3 per annum.

All efforts to stop the progress of the coming storm failed : the mandate went forth, and the larger and richer establishments followed the lesser ones, and were dissolved. Accordingly,

on the 8th of March, 1539, Dr. Chard surrendered the monastery of Ford to Henry VIII.; and the following is a translated copy of the deed, which, as a curiosity, we give entire.

“To all the faithful in Christ, to whom this present writing shall come : Thomas Chard, abbot of the monastery or abbacy, and of the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Ford, in the county of Devon, of the Cistercian order,

Per me Thoma, abbem	and the same place and con-
Willus Rede, prior	vent, everlasting salvation in
John Cosen	the Lord.

Robte. Yetmister

Johēs Newman

Johēs Bridgwat^r

Thomas Stafford

Johēs Ffawell

W. Winsor

Elizeus Oliscomb

William Keynston

William Dynyngton

Richard Kingesbury.

“Know ye, that we, the aforesaid abbot and convent, by our unanimous assent and consent, with our deliberate minds, right knowledge, and mere motion, from certain just and reasonable causes

especially moving our minds and consciences, have freely, and of our own accord, given and granted, and by these presents do give, grant, and surrender and confirm to our most illustrious prince, Henry VIII., by the grace of God,

king of England, lord of Ireland, supreme head of the church of England in this land, all our said monastery or abbacy of Ford aforesaid. And also all and singular manors, lordships, messuages, etc. In testimony whereof, we, the aforesaid abbot and convent, have caused our common seal to be affixed to these presents. Given at our chapter house of Ford aforesaid, on the eighth day of the month of March, and in the thirtieth year of the reign of King Henry aforesaid. Before me, William Petre, one of the clerks, etc., the day and year above written.

By me Willmñ Petre."

The revenues, at the time of the dissolution, were valued at £373 10s. 6d. as appears by a return of the lands belonging to the abbey made to the Exchequer in 1535.

The court of augmentation¹ granted the following pensions to the abbot and convent of the "howse of Ford," and directed that they and every of them should have one quarter's "pencōn at th'annunciacōn of o^e Lady next cumyng, and att the feast of Saint Mychell tharchangell

¹ Dr. Oliver's Monasticon.



next aft' that one halfe yeres pencōn, and soo that from halfe yere to halfe yere duryng ther lyves, is to say:

“Fyrst, to Thomas Charde als Tybbes Abbott, fourtie wayne lodes of fyre wood, to be takne yerely during his lyfe owte of suche woods being no pte of demaynes of the said late howse, as thofficers of the King's courte of the augmentacōns or there deputies for the tyme there shall appoynte and as-
signe;—

And alsoo	lxxx ^{li}	,,	,,
Willm Sherneborne als Rede	vij ^{li}	,,	,,
Richard Exmester als Were	vij ^{li}	,,	,,
John Newman	vj ^{li}	,,	,,
John Cosyns	vj ^{li}	xiijs	iiij ^d
John Brydgewater als Stone	vij ^{li}	,,	,,
Robert Ylmest als Roose	vij ^{li}	,,	,,
John Fawell	,,	cvjs	vij ^d
Thomas Stafford als Bate	,,	cvjs	vij ^d
Ellys Olescum als Potter	vij ^{li}	,,	,,
Willm Wynsor als Hyde	,,	c ^s	,,
Willm Grene	,,	cvjs	vij ^d
Willm Dewyngton als Wylshire . .	,,	c ^s	,,
Richard Kingesbury als Sherman .	,,	c ^s	,,

Summa. clxj^{li} xiijs iiij^d

Dr. Thomas Chard held the vicarage of Thorncombe until his death, which, Prince says, was some time in the year 1543; perhaps the latter end of the year, or the beginning of the year 1544, as William Freyke succeeded to the living May the 20th in that year. His will was dated Oct. 1, 1541, and proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury, Nov. 4, 1544, so that he survived the dissolution of his monastery four years only, or thereabout. However, he must have been gratified to see that all his care in adorning and beautifying the abbey was not destroyed.

Henry VIII., on the 28th Oct., 1539, granted to Richard Pollard, Esq., the buildings, site, and precincts of the abbey of Ford, with lands, meadows, and pastures, on lease, for twenty-one years, at the rent of 49*l.* 6*s.* 6*d.*; viz.

For the site and lands of the abbey	£38	4	6
For Strete Grange and appurtenances	11	2	0
	<hr/>		
	£49	6	6
	<hr/>		

And on the 23rd June, 1540, the king granted it to him in fee; and it is not a little singular

that, notwithstanding the mutations of time, and the various hands through which the property has passed, the fields and meadows are known to this day, by the same names as recited in the deed of conveyance, but which, being long and technical, we refrain from giving.

The manor of Thorncombe, with the advowson, the king granted, April 29th, 1544, to John, earl of Oxford, and Dorothy his wife. It passed, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by purchase, to an ancestor of Lieutenant-Colonel Bragge, of Sadborow, in whose family it has continued to the present time.

Richard Pollard, Esq., was sheriff of Devon in 1537, and in 1541 he was knighted by Henry VIII. He was a son of the famous Sir Lewis Pollard, knight, who was made chief justice of the court of Common Pleas, anno 1515, which honourable office he retained, until age and infirmities obliged him to resign it.

Sir John Pollard, knight, succeeded his father, Sir Richard, and sold Ford Abbey to his cousin-german, Sir Amias Poulett, of Hinton St. George, and Curry Mallet, whose mother was the daughter of Chief Justice Pollard and aunt

to the above Sir John. We have no date of this transfer; and although the charge of prolixity may be incurred, we cannot pass this noted family without a few more particulars in connection with it.

Sir Amias Poulett, grandfather of the purchaser of Ford Abbey, was knighted for his gallant behaviour at the battle of Newark-on-Trent, June the 16th, 1487; he was further memorable for putting Cardinal Wolsey, when only a schoolmaster, for some misdemeanour, in the stocks; which circumstance, however, the cardinal did not forget when in power.

Sir Amias died in 1538. He was a benefactor to the cathedral church of Wells, the churches of Hinton St. George, Chard, Chaffcombe, Crewkerne, Ilminster, etc., etc., and to the abbey and convent of Ford. This last circumstance may account for his arms being cut in stone on a shield outside the cloister, built by the last abbot, Dr. Chard.

Sir Hugh Poulett (son of the above Sir Amias), was, with his son Amias, appointed by Dr. Chard head steward of the abbey, which, in some measure, may have been the reason for

granting the site of the abbey to Richard Pol-lard, brother-in-law to Sir Hugh.

Sir Amias was the direct ancestor of the present noble owner of Hinton St. George. It was to his custody, that the unfortunate Mary, queen of Scots, was committed; and he honour-ably discharged his trust therein, by indignantly repelling the proposition of Secretary Walsing-ham, that one of Sir Amias's servants should be suffered to be bribed by the agents of the queen of Scots, in order to gain better intel-ligence. He was governor of the Isle of Jersey, and being one of Queen Elizabeth's privy council, he was in the commission for the trial of the queen of Scots. He was also chancellor of the most noble order of the garter, and died in 1588.

William Rosewell, Esq., who bought Ford Abbey of Sir Amias Poulett, was solicitor-gene-ral to Queen Elizabeth, from 1558, to 1565.

Sir Henry Rosewell succeeded his father in the inheritance of Ford. He was knighted after the coronation of King James I., and was sheriff of Devon, the fifth year of Charles I., 1629.

We now come to a more interesting period as regards the mansion itself. Hitherto we find no mention of its buildings or of any alterations; nothing, in fact, that gives us an idea of its state after the dissolution, beyond the present portions of the front built by Dr. Thomas Chard, and still so perfect.

Sir Henry Rosewell conveyed Ford Abbey and its demesne, in the year 1649, to Edmund Prideaux, Esq., the second son of Sir Edmund Prideaux, Bart, of Netherton, a family distinguished in the county of Devon from the earliest periods of its history.

Mr. Prideaux took his degree as master of arts in the university of Cambridge. He made the law his chief study, and was very eminent therein. He was chosen a member of the long parliament, and became a very leading man. He was solicitor-general in 1648; and, although striking in with the prevailing party of the day, he never joined with them in setting upon the life of his Sovereign.¹ In 1649, he became attorney-general to the lord protector, was a commissioner of the great seal, and by ordinance

¹ Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

of parliament practised within the bar as king's counsel. He was also made postmaster-general for all the inland letters.

Being thus wealthy, he set about improving and adorning his house; and for that purpose employed the celebrated Inigo Jones, who was at that time attempting to introduce the Grecian style of architecture into the country, but did not live to see his designs here completed, as he died anno 1654. We can trace the alterations very distinctly; and it is fortunate that the splendid front was not more mutilated. The square windows to the state rooms in the western wing of the building, are most incongruous with those of the hall adjoining, which are in the Tudor style. There can hardly, however, be a doubt that the house was very indifferent in accommodation for a family of note; and Mr. Prideaux must have spent enormous sums in the alterations; for the internal decorations, as will be shown hereafter, are of the most magnificent description.

Ford Abbey was saved from the destruction with which so many other mansions were visited during the civil wars and commonwealth, owing to the fortunate circumstance of its being the

residence of Mr. Attorney-General Prideaux. He did not, however, live long after finishing his house to enjoy it, the date of the completion of the grand staircase being 1658, and he dying the eighth of August, 1659. He was buried in the chapel adjoining his house.

Cromwell bestowed upon him the title of Baronet the thirteenth of August, 1658, scarcely three weeks before the protector's death, which took place on the third of September in that year.

Sir Edmund was twice married: first, to Mary, daughter of ——— Collyns, Esq., of Ottery St. Mary; and secondly, to Margaret, the daughter of William Ivery, of Cotthay, in the county of Somerset. He had one son, and three daughters; Mary, married to Sir Giles Tooker, Bart.; Susan, married to Sir John Churchill, master of the rolls; and the youngest, to Sir Thomas Chamberlain, Bart.

He was succeeded in his estates by his only son, Edmund Prideaux, Esq.,¹ who married in his father's life-time, anno 1655, Amy Fraunceis, coheiress of John Fraunceis, of Combe Florey,

¹ Cromwell's titles were not admitted after the restoration.

county of Somerset, Esq., to whom she brought a dower of several extensive manors.

Edmund Prideaux was a highly educated gentleman, having for his tutor that celebrated divine, Bishop Tillotson, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury; and he profited so much under his instructions, that he was styled by his contemporaries "the walking encyclopædia." From the conspicuous part his father played during the protectorate, the son had no place or emolument under government after the restoration. The first notice we find of him is as the entertainer of the unfortunate duke of Monmouth,¹ who, during his journey of pleasure in the West, the latter end of the year 1680, paid him a visit at Ford Abbey, and was treated to a very splendid supper, and where he also slept. In the following year, 1681, Mr. Prideaux was elected, with Mr. Trenchard, M.P. for Taunton; and from a private memorandum in his own handwriting, it appears that on the sixteenth of July, 1683, his house was searched for arms, when two muskets, one brass blunderbuss, four cases of pistols, and one case for his own riding, were taken away.

¹ Mr. Roberts's *Life of the Duke of Monmouth*, vol. ii. p. 254.

In the memorable year 1685, when the duke landed at Lyme Regis, it is reported that Mr. Prideaux remained peaceably at his own house, which was visited by a party, at eight at night, for horses and arms; and that one person, Malachi Mallock, drank to the health of Monmouth. When the news reached London, a warrant was issued to arrest Mr. Prideaux, which was accordingly done on the nineteenth of June. The following memoranda are extracted from a private pocket-book kept by Mr. Prideaux at the time.

“ My confinement:

“ 19th June ('85). Seized by a messenger,
Mr. Saywell.

“ 14th July ('85) released by Habeas Corpus.

“ 14th Sept. ('85) carryed to y^e Tower by
Evans.

“ Released y^e 11th of March, 1685.”¹

After the accession of William III., Mr. Prideaux presented a petition to parliament, for leave to bring in a bill to charge the estates

¹ Old style.

of Judge Jefferies with the restitution of the fifteen thousand pounds he paid for his pardon; and as such petition rehearses the particulars of the transaction, we cannot do better than give it entire.

“To the honourable the knights, cittiznes, and burgesses in parliament assembled.

“The humble petition of Edmund Prideaux, of Ford Abbey, Devonshire, Esquire.

Humbly sheweth—

“That your petitioner being peaceably at his own house at Ford Abbey aforesaid, was, on the nineteenth day of June, 1685, seized by one of his late majestie’s messengers upon a warrant signed by the earl of Sunderland for suspicion of treason, and brought in custody from thence to the messenger’s house in London, where he continued a prisoner till the 14th of July following; at which time he was discharged by an Habeas Corpus giving security to appear the first day of the next term.

“That your petitioner, during the said imprisonment, several times desired to be examined before the council, that he might know his

accusers, or his crime; but could never be admitted thereunto or procure information therein.

“That your petitioner, continuing in London, in order to his appearance, was, on the fourteenth day of September, again seized by a warrant from the earl of Sunderland, and committed a close prisoner to the Tower of London for high treason, where no person was suffered to see him for several weeks; and your petitioner’s wife at length with great difficulty was permitted, but under condition of being made a close prisoner with him, which she was for some time, till by reason of indisposition she prevailed to be released.

“That in the time your petitioner was a prisoner in the Tower, a general enquiry was made by the agents of the Lord Jeffrys amongst all the prisoners and condemned persons in the West, for an accusation against your petitioner; and some of them, with threats and others with promises of life, endeavoured to be procured to be his accusers; particularly, Mr Charles Speke, as he declared before his execution, was proffered his life in case he would swear against him.

“That after all these endeavours, your petitioner could never to this day find he had

any thing sworn against him, there not having been so much as mention of an oath made in his warrant of commitment.

“That your petitioner, though he very well knew his own innocency, yet being informed of the threats daily used by the Lord Jeffrys; and that he frequently said he would hang him; and hearing of the practices of his agents in the West to suborn witnesses, endeavoured to make application to the late King James II. by two several persons of quality for his majesty’s pardon, but was answered, after a fortnight’s expectation, by them both, at several times, that they could not do your petitioner any good, the king having given him to the lord chancellor.

“That your petitioner’s wife, meeting these informations from all hands, procured leave, although with much greater difficulty than before, to see your petitioner again in the Tower, and then acquainting him with the condition of his affairs, a resolution was taken to apply to the lord chancellor (since all other ways were stopt), and accordingly a known agent ¹ of

¹ Mr Jennings

the lord chancellor's undertook to transact the matter with his lordship, the said agent saying, that no person but the lord chancellor could secure your petitioner's pardon, his majesty having given him to his lordship as a reward for his services in the West.

“ That your petitioner's wife, during this transaction, was positively refused any more to see your petitioner in the Tower till she had contracted to lay down fifteen thousand pounds: after which agreement she had liberty of access; and your petitioner, being forced by the said practices and by duress of imprisonment, having been a close prisoner seven months in the Tower, signed bonds for the payment of the said fifteen thousand pounds, which was paid accordingly in three days after, to the great damage and ruin of your petitioner's fortune.

“ Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays, that this honourable house will take into their tender consideration the great oppression your petitioner hath endured, and give leave for the bringing a bill into this honourable house to make the said Jeffryes's estate liable to the

restitution of fifteen thousand pounds to your petitioner, the said Lord Jeffryes having laid out money in a purchase of land of the duke of Albemarle, which, in a little time after this, was so wrongfully extorted from your petitioner.

“ And he shall ever pray.”

The estates referred to as purchased by Jefferies, were Dolby on the Wolds and Nether-Boughton, in Leicestershire.

The bill was not carried, being violently opposed by Lord Chief Justice Pollexfen, trustee for the children and creditors of the deceased peer (Jefferies).

The actual sum paid by Mr. Prideaux was £14,760, there having been £240 remitted for prompt payment of £2,400 which he was allowed to pay in two years.

The original pardon, granted by King James II., is now before us, and is dated the twentieth of March, 1686.

Mr. Prideaux had by his wife (Amy Fraunceis) one son, Fraunceis Prideaux, who died at Oxford, at the age of nineteen; and to whose

memory there is an elegant monument erected by his father in the chapel of Ford, where he was interred. He had also three daughters, viz., Amy, who died young; Elizabeth, married to John Speke, of White Lackington, in the county of Somerset, Esq., (ancestor of the present William Speke, Esq., of Jordans, near Ilminster, by a second wife) who died without issue; and Margaret, who was married in 1690 to her cousin, Francis Gwyn, Esq., of Llansannor, in the county of Glamorgan, in Wales.

Edmund Prideaux died intestate, October the sixteenth, 1702; and, his wife having renounced, letters of administration were granted to Margaret Gwyn, his sole surviving daughter and heiress.

Francis Gwyn thus inherited Ford Abbey. He was descended from the Herberts, earls of Pembroke, and was the only son and heir of Edward Gwyn, by Eleanor Popham, youngest daughter of Sir Francis Popham, of Littlecot, in the county of Wilts.

Having been bred to the bar, he became clerk, of the privy council, and under secretary of state to his cousin Edward, earl of Conway,

when secretary of state, and groom of the bed-chamber, to the time of King Charles II.'s death, February the 6th, anno 1685.

He was also appointed secretary of the treasury under Lawrence, earl of Rochester, lord treasurer in the reign of King James II., and was secretary and privy councillor in Ireland; at the period when the earl of Rochester was lord lieutenant of that kingdom in the reign of William and Mary.

He also became one of the commissioners of trade and plantations, and afterwards secretary at war to Queen Anne to the period of her death, August the 1st, 1714; and was by her majesty presented with the magnificent tapestry which now adorns the saloon.

On the accession of George I., he received his letter of dismissal from Lord Townsend, secretary of state, September the 24th, 1714, of which the following is a copy.

Whitehall, Sept. 24th, 1714.

“ Sir.—The king has commanded me to acquaint you, that he has determined to make Mr. Pulteney secretary at war; has at the same time ordered me to assure you, that although he thinks it for

his service to make that alteration at present, yet he shall be ready, when any opportunity offers, to shew you marks of his favour,

“ I am, with greatest respect,

“ Y^r most obedient humble serv^t,

“ TOWNSEND.”

“ To Francis Gwyn, Esq.,

Francis Gwyn was recorder of Totnes, and sat in several parliaments from the reign of Charles II., 1672, to that of George I., being, with the exception of a few intervals, fifty years, having resigned his seat for Wells in 1727.

He died the second of June, anno 1734, at the advanced age of eighty-six, and was buried at Ford Abbey. He had, by his wife Margaret (who died in 1709), four sons and three daughters, besides others who died young.

He was succeeded in his estates by Edward Prideaux Gwyn, his eldest son, who sat in parliament for Wells, being elected on his father's resignation, but who died intestate and unmarried, anno 1736, whereby his estates devolved to his next brother and heir, Francis Gwyn.

Edmund Gwyn, the third son of the first-named Francis Gwyn, was a lieutenant in the

navy, and died the year before his father, viz. the tenth of June, 1733, without issue.

The Rev. John Gwyn, the fourth son, died the sixth of June, 1741, also without issue; and both he and Edmund were buried in the chapel at Ford.

Of the three daughters, Amy, Margaret, and Catherine, the two first died unmarried.

Catherine was married, in 1744, to Thomas Lord Foley whom she survived, but had no issue.

Francis Gwyn, like his father, was bred to the law, and became prothonotary of the county of Glamorgan; and in 1741 he was elected M.P. for Wells, and sat in several parliaments.

He was twice married: first to Lora Pitt, daughter of George Pitt, of Strathfieldsay, who died in 1750, leaving no issue; and secondly, to Frances Combe, daughter and co-heiress of Mathew Combe, of the city of Winchester, M.D.

Francis Gwyn died the fourth of November, 1777, without issue; and by his will, dated the sixth of June, 1752, he gave all his lands in the counties of Devon, Dorset, Somerset, and

Glamorgan, to his wife for life, with remainder to his kinsman, John Fraunceis, of Combe Florey, in the county of Somerset, and his heirs male, on condition of their assuming the name of Gwyn.

Frances Gwyn survived her husband nearly three years, dying the first of July 1780, when Mr. Fraunceis succeeded to the estate, and, on the thirty-first of July in the same year, by royal licence, assumed the surname of Gwyn.

Having now brought the possession of the abbey into the family of Fraunceis, we propose to show the connection between his family and that of Francis Gwyn, whose grandmother, it will be in the recollection of the reader, was a daughter and co-heiress of John Fraunceis, of Combe Florey, Esquire. We shall trace the descent only from the point that will distinctly shew the connection.

John Fraunceis, of Combe Florey, married Susan, daughter of George Luttrell, of Dunster Castle, in the county of Somerset, and died in 1635, leaving issue John Fraunceis, his eldest son, who married Catherine, daughter of Sir Francis Popham, and left issue, two daughters,

co-heiresses, viz, the aforesaid Amy, who married Edmund Prideaux, and Elizabeth (who had Combe Florey) married to Sir William Bassett, of Claverton, in the county of Somerset; and she dying without issue, the Combe Florey estate reverted to her uncle Thomas Fraunceis, her father's next surviving brother, who died a bachelor in 1686, and was succeeded by his next brother Nicholas Fraunceis, of Burlescombe, whose only son William Fraunceis, of Combe Florey, married Phillippa, daughter of James Prowse, of Norton Fitzwarren, in the county of Somerset, and died in November, 1718, leaving a son, John Fraunceis, who died without issue in 1719, and was succeeded by his next brother, Thomas Fraunceis, who also died without issue in 1723, when the Combe Florey estate devolved to his brother, William Fraunceis, who married Joanna Whitlock, of Old Cleeve, in the county of Somerset. He died the thirty-first of March, 1739, and was succeeded by his only son, John Fraunceis, the devisee named in the will of the said Francis Gwyn.

This gentleman married; first, in 1761, Jane, daughter of Edmund Towill, of Stogumber, in

the county of Somerset, Esquire, by whom he had issue one son, the late John Fraunceis Gwyn (of whom hereafter), and one daughter, Joanna Phillippa, married to John Griffith, of Stogumber, who died in 1801, and left issue; secondly, he married Sarah, daughter of the Rev.—Escott, by whom he had two sons, who died without issue, and one daughter, married to John Fitzgerald, knight of Glin, Castle Glin, Ireland. She died in 1802, leaving issue the present knight of Glin.

Mr. Fraunceis, as before stated, took the name of Gwyn.

He died the third of October, 1789, and was succeeded by his eldest son and heir, John Fraunceis, who, on the death of his father, assumed the name of Gwyn.

The late John Fraunceis Gwyn, Esq., was born the thirty-first of October, 1761. He was a highly educated man, and an elegant classical scholar. He took no part in the eventful political period through which he passed, but delighted more in country sports, and the retirement and peace of his own magnificent mansion, surrounded by all that could please

the eye or gratify the taste, for he courted the muses.

He was a kind and generous master, a liberal landlord, and a benefactor to the poor. The tale of distress never reached him in vain; for his heart and purse were ever open to relieve the wants of his destitute and less fortunate fellow-creatures: he delighted in doing good. "The widow and the fatherless shall praise him": and although he sleepeth, and the inheritance of his fathers has passed into other hands, his name will be blessed by generations yet to come.

Having parted with his own paternal estate, he spent very large sums of money in the internal decorations of Ford Abbey; and to him is the praise due, for making it the elegant mansion which it now is.

Contemplating a tour on the continent, he let it, in December 1815, for three years, to the late Jeremy Bentham, who thence issued some of his celebrated works.

Mr. Gwyn was twice married; first, to Elizabeth, daughter of James Norman, of Thorncombe, who died the twenty-fourth of September, 1807, aged thirty-six, and was buried in the family

vault of the chapel, where a chaste and elegant marble monument was erected to her memory; secondly, he married Dinah, the only child of Reuben Good, of Winsham, in the county of Somerset. She possessed an elevated mind and enlarged soul, which princes might have envied: she nobly seconded her husband in every good deed; and our earnest prayer is, that the good seed she was the means of sowing, may not fall on barren ground.

After years of patient suffering, she calmly departed this life on the twenty-second of June, 1831, aged forty-three years, and was interred in the chapel.

Mr. Gwyn survived this bereavement nearly fifteen years; and during a great portion of this time, he was afflicted with loss of sight, but he bore the deprivation with fortitude and resignation—indeed, from his habitual cheerfulness, he endeavoured to make those around him think he did not feel his infirmity.

He died the twenty-eighth of February, 1846, aged eighty-four years, and four months; and on the fourteenth of March, his mortal remains were consigned to the mausoleum in the chapel. By his

will, he devised to his gréat nephew, John Fraunceis Griffith, Esq., the manor of Upplowman in Devonshire, comprising the ancient seat of the Fraunceises: he also bequeathed handsome legacies for the benefit of the poor of the said parishes of Combe Florey and Thorncombe, and of the national schools of the united parishes of Cowbridge, and Llanblethian, in Glamorganshire, Wales.

Thus ends this imperfect, but faithful, history; and here our task might be considered finished. But for the gratification of those who have, as well as those who have not, seen the mansion, we will endeavour to describe both its internal and external appearance.

Ford Abbey is seated in the vale of the Axe, about four miles from the market town of Chard, in Somerset, and ten from the fashionable watering place of Lyme Regis, in Dorset. The river Axe divides it from Somerset, and winds in serpentine beauty along its fertile meadows for a considerable distance, and is famed for a plentiful supply of delicious trout. The following lines, extracted from a poem in its praise by "J. H. M. Esq.," has been sent us by a friend;

and, being very appropriate, we here insert them.

“Hail, modest streamlet, on whose bank
No willows grow, nor osiers dank;
Whose waters form no stagnant pool,
But, ever sparkling, pure, and cool,
Their snaky channel keep, between
Soft swelling hills of tender green,
That freshens still as they descend
In gradual slope of graceful bend,
And in the living emerald end —
On whose soft turf supinely laid
Beneath the spreading beechen shade,
I trace on fancy’s waking dream
The current of thine infant stream,
Where straggling on with gentle force
Thy waves pursue their distant course.
There crowd upon my mental gaze
Dim visions of the elder days:
Shrouded in black Cistercian cowl,
They pass like spectres o’er my soul,
On each pale cheek and furrowed brow
Impressed the wretched exile’s woe;
While many a sigh recalls with pain
The distant home they hope to gain
Once more, and rest in peace—in vain !
Poor wanderers ye shall never see
The wept-for towers of Waverley,

Nor with enamoured sense inhale
The sweets of Surrey's cultured vale;
Whence at Fitz-Baldwin's high command,
Ye sallied (a devoted band)
To plant the cross in savage land,
Where, free from all restraint of law,
The darkling tribes of infant Taw
And rocky Dartmoor, roamed secure
In the wild franchise of the moor.
A feverish space, 'twixt life and death,
The pious planters gasped for breath;
At length resigned, in mute despair,
The thankless objects of their care
To moulder, left their lowly cell
For ever—and without farewell;
And sick at heart, with watchings worn
With failing limbs, and minds forlorn,
Hopeless they sought the distant bourn
They scarce could dream to reach again,
Then laid them down in reckless pain,
And watch'd, sweet Axe, thy murmur'ing tide
Of waters, as they gently glide
In rapid silence to the sea,
Fit emblem of eternity.
But pious Adeliza there,
The conqueror's kin and Baldwin's heir,
Fair Devon's Countess—rich as fair;
And, more than fair or rich, devout,—

Beheld them on their homeward route;
With liberal hand relieved their woes:
And Ford's majestic abbey rose.—

The mansion is approached from Chard by a bridge over the Axe; and, on entering the carriage drive, the eastern portion, or Monk's-walk side, of the house is presented to the view, covered with luxuriant ivy, the growth of centuries. A feeling of disappointment is here felt at its appearance; and it is not until by ascending a gentle acclivity to the south of the chapel, that the magnificent front bursts on the sight in unparalleled beauty, filling the beholder with admiration and delight. The portions still remaining, built by Dr. Thomas Chard (the last abbot), now appear to advantage. The first claiming attention, is the cloister in the florid Gothic or Tudor style, the mullions and tracery of the windows, beautifully designed, and over them a frieze of stone work with shields of the arms of various benefactors to the abbey: viz. the Courtenays quartering Rivers; those of Poulett, the bishop of Exeter, etc. etc.; and T. C., the initials of Thomas Chard. It is strange that neither those of the abbey, nor of Dr. Chard,

appear on this or any other part of the building.

The common seal of the abbey bore on it the Virgin Mary seated, with the infant Jesus on her knee; below her stands the abbot holding his crosier, and on each side of him monks on their knees in adoration.

Two shields are charged with the arms of Courtenay and Beauchampe; the legend is "S. Commune. Monasterii. Beate. Marie. de. Forda."

Edmonson tells us, that the Chard arms are or and gules quarterly; over all, a label of five points: and a learned friend has informed us that he had seen the same on an old deed belonging to that family.

The cloister is divided by a suite of rooms and arcade from the grand porch tower, so conspicuous for its architectural beauty; and which, in days gone by, was no doubt the original entrance. It is richly ornamented with first-rate sculpture, some of it obviously unfinished; the central boss in the vaulting is uncut; and the blank shield in the centre below the basement window encircled by the garter was, doubtless, intended for the royal arms. The uncut

shield on the sinister side, having the pelican and dolphin for supporters, was for Courtenay; the two small shields cut are charged with a lion rampant for De Redvers; and chequy two bars for Baldwin de Brioniis. Immediately over the arch of the door, is a large scroll shield of a more modern date, bearing the arms of Prideaux, impaling those of his second wife, Ivery. On the upper part of this elegant specimen of Dr. Chard's taste, in the centre shield, are his initials T. C., with the crosier and mitre (Dr. Chard was suffragan bishop), and two smaller shields with the T. C., crosier and abbot's cap, alternate with the stag's head cabossed, supposed to be the bearing of the then bishop of Exeter; and just under the battlement is the inscription before alluded to. In this porch, there is a handsome window to the west, corresponding with those of the adjoining great hall (which are in unison with those of the cloister), and over is a frieze of grotesque animals. This part of the building has been shorn of its length as, on minute inspection, will appear. The royal arms are not in the centre as they, no doubt, originally were: they consist

of a rose crowned, encircled with the garter, and supported by a dragon and greyhound, the badges of Henry VII. The red dragon was the ensign of Cadwallader, the last king of the Britons, from whom, by a male line, he is said to have claimed his descent. This red dragon, painted upon white and green silk was his standard at Bosworth, and was afterwards offered up, among other trophies of his victory, at St. Paul's, and commemorated by the institution of a pursuivant of arms, by the name of Rouge Dragon. The greyhound argent, accolloed, gules, he bore in right of his wife, Elizabeth of York, descended from Nevil, earl of Westmoreland.¹ Although the remaining portion of this wing has been altered, it was built by Thomas Chard, the battlements corresponding with the tower and chapel; and, as a more decisive proof that it was so, there is, at the western end of the building, but hid by ivy, the portcullis cut in stone, another of the badges of Henry VII.; and to the north or back side, are the initials T.C., with the crosier and cap.

There is a gravelled terrace in front, extending a considerable distance on each side of the

¹ Sandford's Genealogical History of the Kings of England.

house, and available in all weathers for a promenade.

We will now lead the uninitiated to the interior, where scenes of great beauty await the eye. The entrance on the eastern side is through a vestibule to the cloister, eighty-two feet in length and seventeen feet high, the vaulting and tracery as perfect as when built by Dr. Chard, and in beautiful keeping with its external appearance and workmanship. It is now used as a conservatory, and filled with luxurious orange and lemon trees: here we first notice the handiwork of Inigo Jones in the square doors at each end, destroying its harmony. Ascending a flight of steps, we come to two rooms to the left; first, a comfortable dining parlour, panelled and gilt, and surrounded by some good paintings; secondly, a little morning room, having a chaste Grecian ceiling, with three windows facing the lawn and opening into it, and another to the west, making it airy and cheerful. We now return and enter the great hall or refectory, fifty-five feet by twenty-seven feet nine inches; height, twenty-eight feet, having four large windows to the south, answered

by blank pannels of corresponding design to the north, which, in olden time when Master Tyler "expounded the scripture to the brethren," were in all probability open. The ceiling is flattened, of beautifully carved wainscot, painted and gilt, with gold stars in the compartments. The walls are partly wainscoted with oak benches running around them. Some very quaint painted gilt leather chairs, and a peculiarly fashioned old sofa, were its furniture. A handsome brass chandelier depends from the centre of the ceiling with branches for twenty-four lights, and several good paintings hang against the walls; but the only one we shall notice, as being of historical interest, is a full length of Sir Edward Seymour, Bart., who made a distinguished figure in his day both in court and parliament during four successive reigns, promoting, in 1667, the impeachment of Clarendon, and carrying it to the House of Lords in 1672-3. He was chosen speaker of the House of Commons, and was the author of the Habeas Corpus Act. Burnet describes him as the ablest man of his party, the first speaker of the House of Commons not bred to the bar, a graceful man, bold and

quick, and of high birth, being the elder branch of the Seymour family. We pass on to the state apartments : first, we come to the grand dining room (this was taken from the hall, and was no doubt the dais portion of it), designed by Inigo Jones and added by Edmund Prideaux, the attorney-general; it is in the highest state of preservation, the unique and magnificent ceiling, the elaborately carved and gilt wainscot, displaying the style of that celebrated architect. It is lighted by three large windows commanding a view of the park and pleasure ground. Over the chimney piece is a painting by Snyders of a well-stocked larder, with a female figure in the act of spitting a fowl; over the entrance door is a beautiful painting of game and fruit by Weenix, and some excellent Chinese paintings on glass, representing the seraglio gardens, surround the room; the chairs are of carved high-backed tapestry of Queen Anne's day. An air of comfort, seldom united to so much splendour, is felt on entering the state drawing-room, the walls of which are adorned with four pieces of Gobelin tapestry, in beautiful preservation, placed between carved and gilt pilasters, and representing—

First.—Scipio Africanus leading Asdrubal, the last Carthaginian general, prisoner into Rome.

Second.—A Roman gladiator encountering a lion before the statue of Jupiter.

Third.—Cyrus, king of Persia, with the vessels full of silver and gold for rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem.

Fourth.—The Temple in progress.

A superb Axminster carpet covers the floor; the chairs are of fine needle-work, telling of the industry of former generations, and are the same as the ladies of the present age are again adopting; the ceiling is elaborate, and corresponds with that of the dining-room; the windows also match, pier glasses in panel occupying the spaces between. Over these apartments, is a suite of rooms, seven in number, the principal one being Queen Anne's room, fitted up for that sovereign when Francis Gwyn was secretary at war; the walls being hung with fine old tapestry representing a Welsh wedding: adjoining, is the green damask, or tapestry room, of good proportions; both of these rooms have windows corresponding with those of the state rooms below

and command views of the park, grounds and shrubbery, with the ornamental waters of the latter agreeably diversifying the scene. We cannot omit to mention that underneath the staircase, in the ceiling, is a large rose surrounded with this motto: "Est rosa flos veneris cujus quo furta laterent, Harpocratii matris dona dicavit amor." The ancients regarded the rose as the emblem of joy; it is also called the flower of Venus, and dedicated by Cupid to Harpocrates, the god of silence, for that reason it was often suspended over dining tables to remind the guests that what transpired over the convivial cup was not to be revealed, and thence arose the saying, *sub rosâ*, or under the rose. The blessing the rose by the pope, is held as a great festival at Rome; and gold and silver roses are sometimes sent by his Holiness to crowned heads, as a mark of his especial favour: they were also placed over confessionals as emblems of secrecy. Now, whether the rose in question was over the abbot's table or his confessional, we must leave to those more learned in history to determine. But to proceed with our description—crossing the hall we enter the grand staircase (and truly so)

of ample width, with a splendidly carved balustrade, the design of Inigo Jones. Here are some valuable works of art, consisting of portraits, game and fruit pieces, and other paintings. Of the first, the principal ones are Charles I. and his beauties—Nell Gwynne (no relation to the late proprietors of the abbey), Lucy Walters, and the duchess of Cleveland; Lord Rochester, in his robes as knight of the garter, temp., Charles II., Lord Clarendon, General Popham, Cardinal Wolsey, etc., etc.; a curious Dutch painting (on panel) of the life of Christ; also a company of the most eminent reformers (said to be portraits) with the candle of the reformation, and the pope, pope's nuncio, etc., attempting in vain to blow it out. The saloon is here entered, being a noble apartment fifty feet by eighteen feet, height twenty-eight feet, designed by Inigo Jones; the ceiling is vaulted, and in compartments representing various subjects; in the centre is a large shield bearing the arms of Prideaux and Ivery, Prideaux and Fraunceis, showing that the room was not completed until after the marriage of the attorney-general's son with Amy Fraunceis. Here

are placed the tapestries before spoken of from the cartoons of Raphael, and so noted for their gorgeousness and perfect colouring ; they are five in number, the subjects as follow:—

First.—The men of Lystra sacrificing to Paul and Barnabas as Jupiter and Mercury.

Second.—Our Saviour's charge to Peter.

Third.—St. Peter and St. John healing the lame man at the beautiful gate of the Temple.

Fourth.—Ananias and Sapphira (part).

Fifth.—The miraculous draught of fishes.

The side borders to each are very handsome, consisting of pillars wreathed with grape vines, and Cupids gathering the fruit, while those at the top are composed of festoons of fruits and vegetables, having a shield in the centre.

Regarding these elegant and unsurpassed works of art, the family tradition is, that they were intended for the king of Spain, from the celebrated looms of Arras,¹ but were taken from a Spanish galleon, by one of our ships of war

¹ Arras, the capital of Artois, now in the department of Pas de Calais, once celebrated for its great manufacture of tapestry.

during the reign of Queen Anne, and became a droit of the admiralty. Her majesty subsequently presented them to her secretary at war, Francis Gwyn, who placed them in this most suitable apartment, first removing the panelling to admit them properly.

Much might be said of these fine specimens of an art that, with the exception of the royal manufactory at Paris, has, unfortunately, long since passed away.

The cartoons were painted by Raphael at the express desire of, and for, Pope Leo X., as patterns for tapestry, and two sets were worked off at Brussels, which at that period excelled in art and splendor every other time and place, and were called "the gold and silver sets"; one set was placed in the Vatican at Rome, where, after many vicissitudes, it still remains; the other, Leo presented to Henry VIII., which was sold with other effects of Charles I., in 1649, to Don Alonzo de Cardenas, the Spanish ambassador, at whose decease it devolved to the duke of Alba, in whose house it remained, until purchased by Mr. Tupper, the British consul, in 1823, and brought to England and resold to

Mr. Trull, a merchant, who in 1840 published a pamphlet entitled "Raphael Vindicated", stating the above particulars; and further, that the cartoons (the only ones left) now at Hampton Court, remained for years in the factory at Brussels, and were purchased by Charles I.

In the reign of James II. Sir Francis Crane set up a manufactory of tapestry at Mortlake in Surrey; but from the low state of the arts, the productions were poor, which led Charles to purchase the Raphael cartoons not as PICTURES, but as PATTERNS, to improve the manufacture of tapestry; and in Rymer's *Fœdera*, there is an acknowledgment from Charles, that he owed Sir F. Crane six thousand pounds for tapestry; and he grants to him two thousand pounds a year for three years, for the maintenance of the work; but during the civil war, the factory was neglected, and the cartoons were carelessly packed away. They were intended to be sold with King Charles's property. Cromwell bought them for the purpose for which they were designed by Charles. Mr. Trull states, that Charles II. actually sold them to the

ambassador of France, as Louis XIV. was then establishing the Gobelin factory at Paris, but that Lord Danby stepped forward in favour of his country, and prevented their being sent away. They remained without any further notice until William III. rescued them from oblivion, had a gallery built for them at Hampton Court, and employed an artist named Cook to repair them, for they were in a wretched condition, having been cut in pieces for patterns; and thus used, they were necessarily defaced. The gist of Mr. Trull's pamphlet is to prove that the cartoons, as now appearing, have been much altered, and patched; and so much so, indeed, that but little of Raphael remains of them; and this he does by comparing them with the tapestries in his own possession, which he asserts to be the actual tapestries presented by Léo X., to Henry VIII.

We should not have quoted so largely from Mr. Trull, had he not stated that ALL the tapestries now on the walls of our palaces and noble mansions, naming Burleigh, Chatsworth, and FORD ABBEY, were of an inferior description; and this, without having seen (at least) the

latter, as he afterwards acknowledged in a letter to the late proprietor, in consequence of a friend of his having seen them, and undeceived him as to their merits.

The tapestries we have described, have been at Ford Abbey ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR YEARS, and are unequalled in England. Moreover, we recently heard a lady who had just arrived from Rome, declare that they were superior (particularly the "Sacrifice at Lystra") in richness of colour to those in the Vatican.

It is an undoubted fact, that Catherine of Russia, through Count Orloff, offered THIRTY THOUSAND POUNDS for them to the second Francis Gwyn; but no money could purchase what had been presented to his father by a sovereign.

The saloon is well lighted by two large windows to the south, with glass folding doors leading to a balcony, whence a delightful prospect is obtained: three circular windows are over it and three to the north to correspond. A small organ, of fine tone and considerable power, occupies a recess near the south-east window.

A suite of three rooms is entered from the saloon: first, the boudoir, an elegant and comfortable apartment, the walls covered with Chinese silk of a rich pattern, with doors chastely carved, and painted white and gilt, and chairs and settees to match; the second is an ante-room, and the third a bedroom, the walls being hung with tapestry: two dressing-rooms and a bath-room adjoin.

Crossing the corridor is another bedroom called the vestibule, with a handsome window to the east that commands the entrance and grounds for some distance; a small dressing-room is attached.

A flight of stairs leads up to a noble apartment over the chapel, where two windows to the south overlook the park and upper portion of the estate; and another window in the east end commands an extensive view of the river, meadows, and woods, with the picturesque village of Winsham in the distance.

Descending three flights of stairs we pass through two lobbies, and enter what is called "The Monks' Walk;" but why or wherefore we cannot determine, unless so designated from its being situated over the ancient

double cloister, to which steps lead down from out of it. It was the dormitory of the pious monks, and is ninety-seven feet in length, lighted by lancet windows to the west. It must not be imagined, that this remains as "in days of yore," for it bears too strongly the impress of innovation; it has been divided by a partition wall running down the middle, to convert the eastern side into sleeping apartments for domestics, which was done in all probability by Edmund Prideaux, as the square windows to the bedrooms savour of those in the other altered parts of the building. The doors were also square, and the roof flat, with a lime and sand floor, until the late Mr. Gwyn paved the one and vaulted the other, adding pointed arched doors to correspond with the lancet windows.

We have been informed, that in the Cistercian monasteries abroad, the dormitories are long and open, like the wards of a hospital, and the pallets of the brotherhood separated from each other by a curtain, the abbot reposing in the centre with lights burning before him; and there can hardly be a doubt that this apartment was of that character.

The domestic and culinary offices are spacious, and fitted for every convenience of a large establishment, while the kitchen is fit for a palace.

Opposite the northern or kitchen entrance, is a flight of Ham-hill stone steps leading to the refectory with the ancient buttery to the left. It was here when abbeys supplied the place of hostelries, that the weary traveller received food and ale to refresh himself and passed on, unless of rank and station claiming a night's lodging, and a seat at the abbot's table.

We have now only to notice the chapel, which is the gem of the abbey ; there can be no doubt that this structure is coeval with the foundation, and in all probability, the very resting-place of the mortal remains of the Lady Adeliza, the foundress. It is of the Anglo-Norman architecture : rounded ribs, springing out of solid square ^{headed} Norman pilasters, support the vaulted roof ; the principal arches are obtusely but decidedly pointed, and ornamented with the zig-zag fret-work peculiar to the style. The grotesque pendants nailed to the vault are of a more modern date. The eastern window is of the Tudor order,

and supposed to have been introduced by Dr. Chard to correspond with the cloister and hall. The chapel is divided by an elaborately carved screen in unison with the pulpit, with panelled walls of the same date and order as the decorations of the state rooms; several mural tablets and hatchments to the Prideaux and Gwyn families are erected on the walls.

We must now crave permission to say a few words in behalf of that much-abused architect, Inigo Jones, for his alterations in this mansion. It should be remembered, that monastic establishments at that period, had not very long been suppressed, and fears were entertained that popery would again rear its head. The horrible massacre of the protestants in Ireland, had but just occurred; and the body politic had undergone a great convulsion both in church and state. The community, having risen out of the darkness of popery, had also set aside monarchy as connected therewith, and rushed into the opposite extreme of fanatical puritanism, when every thing ancient was attempted to be swept away. Instead, therefore, of cavilling at what was done, we should be thankful that so much that is beau-

tiful is still left for us to admire. Inigo Jones lived for his day.

The grounds and shrubbery around the mansion abound in delightful walks between rows of lofty and umbrageous chesnut, beech, lime and fir trees: there is also a magnificent cedar of Libanus, of great size and beauty, around whose trunk a curiously formed seat invites the lover of woodland scenery to repose from the heat of the noon-tide sun; whilst through a vista, formed by Nature's hand, a peep at the ornamental water below is obtained, the murmuring sound of the distant waterfall wrapping the mind in an elysium of delight.

The park is thickly studded with stately oak, beech, elm, and chesnut trees; the latter forming quite a grove, beneath whose shade the deer are seen reposing in luxurious ease and security. From the rising ground are obtained enchanting views of

“ Hill and dale, and purling brook;”

and a sheet of water, covering three acres of ground, well stocked with various descriptions of fish, with wild fowl gliding over its glassy surface, forms no slight feature in the landscape,

while the rich meadows, teeming with flocks of the purest breed, the gently sloping hills, covered with waving corn, the extensive woods and plantations, with their ever-varying tints of light and shade, altogether realise Pope's description of Windsor Forest:—

“ Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again,
Not chaos-like, together crushed and bruised,
But, as the world, harmoniously confused;
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree.”

FINIS.

1891

1892

1893

1894

1895

1896

1897



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TORONTO 5, CANADA

